

help address the concerns of many retirees regarding access, availability and scheduling of appointments, claims filing, processing and payment, and national enrollment.

This bill is an important first step toward achieving the goal we share, and I look forward to working closely with my colleagues on the Senate Armed Services Committee and in the Senate to enact it.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Tuesday, February 22, 2000, the Federal debt stood at \$5,742,317,374,668.82 (Five trillion, seven hundred forty-two billion, three hundred seventeen million, three hundred seventy-four thousand, six hundred sixty-eight dollars and eighty-two cents).

One year ago, February 22, 1999, the Federal debt stood at \$5,617,212,000,000 (Five trillion, six hundred seventeen billion, two hundred twelve million).

Five years ago, February 22, 1995, the Federal debt stood at \$4,835,999,000,000 (Four trillion, eight hundred thirty-five billion, nine hundred ninety-nine million).

Ten years ago, February 22, 1990, the Federal debt stood at \$2,992,794,000,000 (Two trillion, nine hundred ninety-two billion, seven hundred ninety-four million).

Fifteen years ago, February 22, 1985, the Federal debt stood at \$1,695,818,000,000 (One trillion, six hundred ninety-five billion, eight hundred eighteen million) which reflects a debt increase of more than \$4 trillion—\$4,046,499,374,668.82 (Four trillion, forty-six billion, four hundred ninety-nine million, three hundred seventy-four thousand, six hundred sixty-eight dollars and eighty-two cents) during the past 15 years.

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mr. Thomas, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The nominations received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR

The following bills were read a second time and placed on the calendar.

S. 2081. A bill entitled "Religious Liberty Protection Act of 2000."

H.R. 6. An act to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to reduce the marriage penalty by providing for adjustments to the

standard deduction, 15-percent rate bracket, and earned income credit and to repeal the reduction of the refundable tax credits.

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, which were referred as indicated:

EC-7605. A communication from the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, transmitting the Report of the Proceedings of the Judicial Conference of the United States; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

EC-7606. A communication from the Chief, Regulations Unit, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "March 2000 Applicable Federal Rules" (Rev. Rul. 2000-11), received February 22, 2000; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-7607. A communication from the President of the United States of America, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a safeguard action relative to the import of steel wire rod; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-7608. A communication from the Director of the Office of Personnel Management, transmitting, pursuant to law, the 1998 annual report on Veterans' Employment in the Federal Government; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

EC-7609. A communication from the Assistant Legal Adviser for Treaty Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of the texts and background statements of international agreements, other than treaties; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-7610. A communication from the Director, Defense Security Cooperation Agency transmitting, pursuant to law, a report containing an analysis and description of services performed by full-time USG employees during Fiscal Year 1999; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-7611. A communication from the Assistant Secretary for Management and Budget, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to its commercial activities inventory; to the Committee on Governmental Affairs.

EC-7612. A communication from the Director, Office of Personnel Management, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to its commercial activities inventory; to the Committee on Governmental Affairs.

EC-7613. A communication from the Comptroller General of the United States, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of the list of General Accounting Office reports for January 2000; to the Committee on Governmental Affairs.

EC-7614. A communication from the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Farm Credit Administration, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Commission's report under the Government in the Sunshine Act for calendar year 1999; to the Committee on Governmental Affairs.

EC-7615. A communication from the Manager, Benefits Communications, Farm Credit Bank of Wichita, Kansas transmitting, pursuant to law, the annual report for the plan year 1998 and a copy of the public accountant's report for 1997 and 1998; to the Committee on Governmental Affairs.

EC-7616. A communication from the Benefits Manager, CoBank transmitting, pursuant to law, the annual report of the ACB Retirement Plan for 1998; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-7617. A communication from the Chairman of the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled "Competing for Federal Jobs: Job Search Experiences of New Hires"; to the Committee on Governmental Affairs.

EC-7618. A communication from the Secretary of Defense, transmitting, the report of a retirement; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-7619. A communication from the Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness), transmitting, pursuant to law, the annual report for fiscal year 1999 of the National Guard Youth Challenge Program; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-7620. A communication from the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Department of Defense transmitting, pursuant to law, the annual National Guard and Reserve Component Equipment Report for fiscal year 2001; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-7621. A communication from the Deputy Chief, National Forest System, Department of Agriculture transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of rivers added to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System by the Omnibus Oregon and Scenic Rivers Act of 1988; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC-7622. A communication from the Director, Office of Surface Mining, Department of the Interior, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "West Virginia Regulatory Program" (WV-077-FOR), received February 18, 2000; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC-7623. A communication from the Assistant General Counsel for Regulatory Law, Department of Energy, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Classified Information Systems Security Manual" (DOE M 471.2-2), received February 17, 2000; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC-7624. A communication from the Assistant General Counsel for Regulatory Law, Department of Energy, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Contractor Employee Protection Program" (RIN1901-AA78), received February 17, 2000; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC-7625. A communication from the Assistant General Counsel for Regulatory Law, Department of Energy, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Control and Accountability of Nuclear Materials" (DOE O 474.1 and DOE M 474.1-1), received February 17, 2000; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC-7626. A communication from the Assistant General Counsel for Regulatory Law, Department of Energy, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Classified Information Systems Security Manual" (DOE M 471.2-2), received February 17, 2000; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC-7627. A communication from the Director, Office of Regulatory Management and Information, Office of Policy, Planning and Evaluation, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Furilazole; Time-Limited Pesticide Tolerance" (FRL #6490-3), received February 17, 2000; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-7627. A communication from the Director, Office of Regulatory Management and Information, Office of Policy, Planning and Evaluation, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Zinc Phosphide; Extension/Amendment of Tolerance for Emergency Exemptions" (FRL #6489-8), received February 17, 2000; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.